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ABSTRACT

For Taiwan, Republic of China, a nation with limited natural resources and a population of 22 million people in an area of only 36,000 square kilometers, the development and use of human resources plays a pivotal role in sustainable economic growth. Vocational education and training are two major human development methods. Since persons with disabilities in Taiwan account for about 2.6 percent of the total population, the government has begun to incorporate vocational training requirements for this group into recent legislation. As a result of the Vocational Training Act, public centers offer training in several trades each year to accommodate the training needs of persons with disabilities, as well as sponsoring training programs offered by private centers, vocational schools, and other organizations. The government is now starting an employment security program to combine vocational training, employment services, and unemployment subsidies for persons with disabilities, with a goal of helping them to reach full employment. A voucher program has been started to make the training more flexible. Efforts to help persons with disabilities need to include motivation and encouragement of these persons. The elements of a successful vocational program include planning, design, implementation, and evaluation. Well-planned and well-designed vocational training programs for persons with disabilities lead to successful employment outcomes. (Contains 13 references.) (KC)

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Vocational Training for the Disabled in Taiwan, Republic of China

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Vocational Training for the Disabled in Taiwan, Republic of China

Abstract

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Vocational training and evaluation, education and rehabilitation, and job placement and career counseling have become the major themes of human resource development for the disabled. Considering the characteristics of the disabled who seek for employment, these three themes are actually interrelated and should be discussed collectively. Because of the concept that vocational training is an integral part of the social security system, the government has started to incorporate vocational training in recent legislation regarding the training for the disabled, and has taken several measures to create better training and employment environments for the targeted population.

This presentation addresses the importance of vocational training for the disabled, current status of vocational training in Taiwan, strategies for vocational training, possible problems associated with vocational training, and finally a conclusion.

Keywords: vocational training, training and employment, the disabled

For a nation with a population of 22 million people in an area of only 36,000 square kilometers, and with limited natural resources, the development and utilization of human resources indeed play a pivotal role in the nation's sustainable economic growth. Vocational education and training are two major human development methods. The latter gears to increasing occupational skills to meet the requirements of jobs while the former usually fosters citizens' academic knowledge and technical skills. More specifically, the disabled population accounts for approximately 2.6% of the total population of the country this year (see Table 1). The government has started to incorporate vocational training in recent legislation regarding the training and employment for the disabled because this kind of training has been considered to be part of an effective social welfare system. In the system, job placement takes place after the disabled are trained or educated through the processes of career preparation and counseling. The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (EVTA), Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, has the responsibility to carry out legislation and strives to provide optimal employment services and vocational training for the underprivileged people including the disabled and other groups of the targeted populations (The Employment and Vocational Training Administration, 1999a).

This paper addresses the importance of vocational training for the disabled, current status of vocational training for the disabled in Taiwan, strategies for vocational training for the disabled, possible problems associated with vocational training for the disabled, and finally a conclusion.

Table 1. Population of the Disabled

Year	Population of the Disabled	
	Number	Ratio(%)
1989	148,287	0.74
1990	154,162	0.76
1991	204,158	0.99
1992	226,642	1.09
1993	263,557	1.26
1994	312,671	1.48
1995	393,630	1.84
1996	456,683	2.12
1997	500,138	2.30
1998	571,125	2.60

Source: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (1999b)

The Importance of Vocational Training for the Disabled

From the literature related to the training of the disabled, there are several underlying reasons for conducting the programs. First, the disabled have the right of

work as well as that of education. The constitution protects all people from being deprived of their rights of work and education. In spite of the variations in types existing among different disabled groups (see Table 2 & Figure 1), it is the government' responsibility to provide necessary education and training opportunities for these people in order to support them becoming economically independent and productive in the society (Yang, 1998). Next, vocational training paves the way for later employment. Jobs are usually referred to the manifestation of a needs hierarchy and the gratification of prepotent needs (Maslow, 1954; Roe, 1956). The ultimate training attainments include economic independence, social acceptance, and self – fulfillment. It is also the desire of most of the disabled to meet their individual needs through work. Finally, if the disabled are not fully employed, the precious human resources seem down to the drain. Because they are unemployed, these people will become helpless, thus resulting in more social problems such as the increase of unemployment rate and youth crime, and vandalism. Their work potential can be developed through training and education. This influx of human resources will definitely improve a nation's productivity to compete in the global economy.

Two research reports showed the unemployment rates of the disabled in Taiwan. Chei (1986) found 48.44 % unemployment rate of the disabled, and another report revealed that 85% of the mentally retarded graduates of junior high schools were unemployed (Sheu, Liu, & Shyu, 1988). Rusch (1991) investigated the same topic in the U.S. and found that 86% of the mentally retarded was either unemployed or employed part time. Although the unemployment rates of the disabled are astonishing high, the future employment outlook seems optimal as considering the following situations: low birth rate causing insufficient labor supply, the demand for brain over physical strength, shortage of skilled workers, the Welfare for the Disabled Act, and the Protection of the Disabled Act requiring the hiring of the disabled workers (The Employment and Vocational Training Administration, 1999; Wu, 1994).

Current Status of Vocational Training for the Disabled in Taiwan

In order to plan and implement national vocational training programs, EVTA was established in 1981. According to the Vocational Training Act of 1983, the training areas include pre-employment training, upgrading training, apprenticeship training, second expertise or job transfer training, and vocational training for the disabled. Thirteen public training centers with approximately 8,000 training slots over 100 different trades are accessible to the public with the above training needs. On the other hand, private enterprises in Taiwan also conduct their on-the-job training.

Table 2. The Disabled Population in Taiwan and Fuchien Area

Unit: Persons

End of Year (Quarter) & Locality	Grand-Total	Visually Handicapped	Deaf or Auditory Handicapped	Speech or Language Ability Handicapped	Physically Handicapped	Mentally Retarded	Important Organs to Lose Function	Disfigurements	Dementia	Alzheimer's Disease
1991	204,158	19,403	5,458	5,299	102,370	38,316	489	31	29	5
1992	226,642	19,423	7,746	5,592	112,165	41,774	5,902	197	352	152
1993	263,557	20,002	13,166	7,528	129,727	44,695	10,929	485	726	466
1994	312,671	22,402	23,786	7,730	149,659	49,237	16,435	914	1,272	920
1995	393,630	25,894	35,124	9,378	181,652	54,604	23,416	1,334	1,885	1,841
1996	456,683	28,224	43,055	7,516	205,713	59,570	29,114	1,530	2,558	2,832
1997	500,138	29,063	50,349	7,718	219,817	61,416	35,082	1,689	3,109	3,978
1998	571,125	32,019	59,298	8,333	248,122	65,111	43,370	1,889	3,985	5,574

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs (1999).

In 1999, over 898 business enterprises offered training to 590,000 employees (Ministry of Domestic Affairs, 1999).

The training of the disabled is one of the major tasks of the Vocational Training Act. Public training centers offer training in several trades each year to accommodate the training needs of the disabled while the EVTA also sponsors many vocational training programs which will be carried out by some qualified private training centers, vocational schools, industrial organizations, public enterprises, and welfare service institutes. After the training and vocational evaluation, there come job placement and career counseling through employment services. Thus, social security and welfare can be assured. The government now is starting an employment security program to combine vocational training, employment services, and unemployment subsidy together with an aim to reaching full employment of the citizens. Among the expected outcomes, the disabled and other underprivileged people can benefit from the program the most (United Daily News, 1999a).

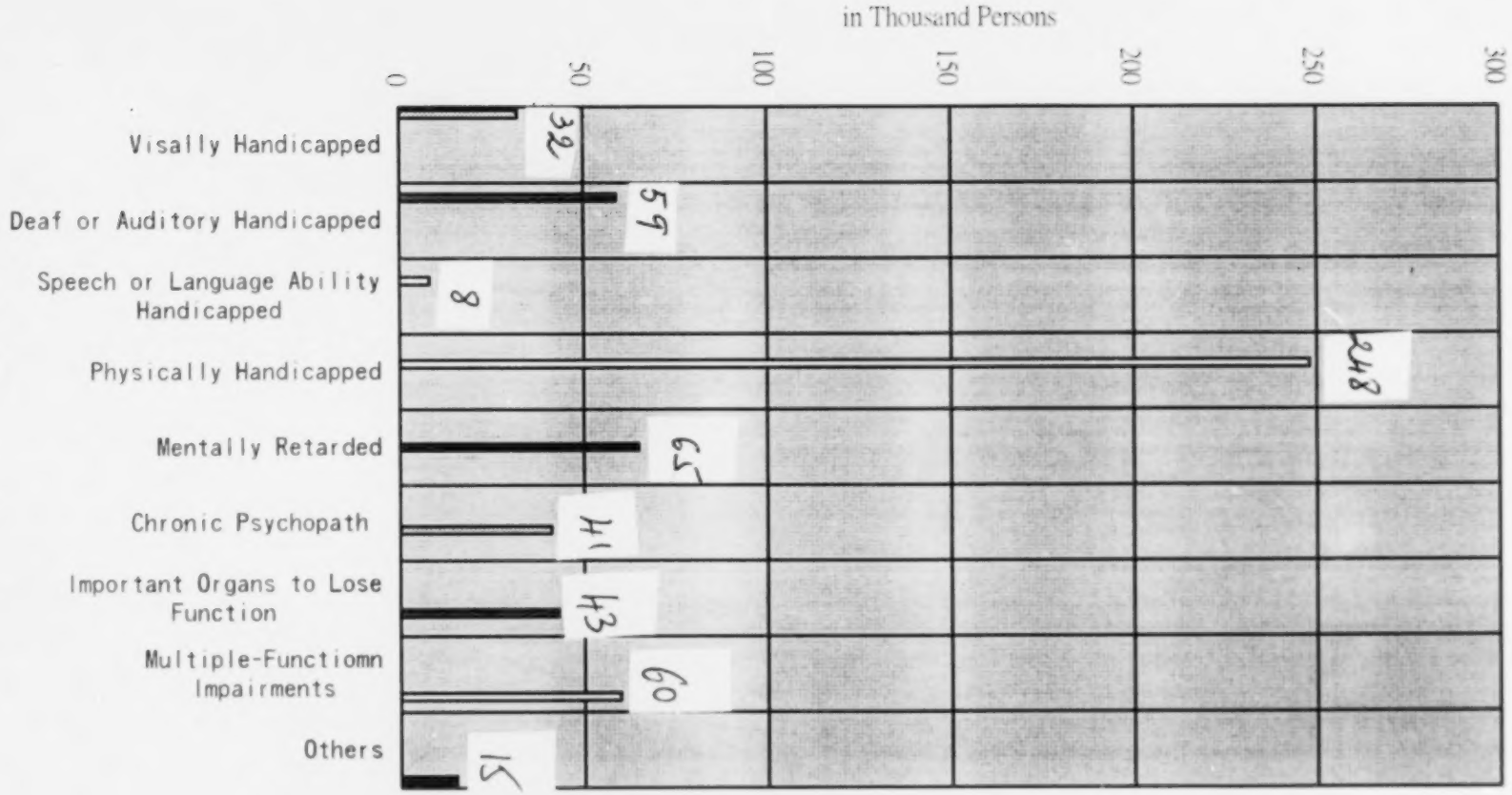

Figure 1 Population of the Disabled by Their Types

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Strategies for Vocational Training for the Disabled

Vocational training and evaluation, education and rehabilitation, and job placement and career counseling have become the major themes of human resource development for the disabled. Considering the characteristics of the disabled who seek for employment, these themes are actually interrelated and should be discussed collectively (Chang, Rau, & Chou, 1988). The government starts to tackle the issue of vocational training for the disabled by enacting four pieces of legislation: the Vocational Training Act, the Employment Service Act, the Welfare for the Disabled Act, and the Protection of the Disabled Law. The next stage is to conduct vocational training programs for the disabled. Table 3 indicates the numbers of the disabled completing training from 1995-1998. At the same time, other supplementary measures include the subsidy for disabled trainees in public training centers, the financial aids for trainees during the training period, the subsidy for local training agencies (see Table 4) involved in this type of training, and regulations of hiring the disabled as employees.

Table 3. Numbers of the Disabled Completing Training from 1995-1998

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998
Number	508	1,192	747	955

Source: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (1999b). *Statistical report on employment and training*. Taipei: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration, Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, Republic of China.

Table 4. Numbers of the Vocational Trainees through City/County Government

FY	1995	1997	1998	1999
Institutions	23	24	24	23
Trainees	6,474	7,428	9,307	5,659

Source: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (1999b). *Statistical report on employment and training*. Taipei: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration, Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, Republic of China.

In fact, currently every disabled trainee can receive NT$ 10,000 of living allowance per month for six months at most, and NT$ 2,400 for meals per month. The numbers of these recipients were shown in Table 5 & Table 6. Additionally, quota system for hiring the disabled further guarantees the work opportunities for these people. For instance, by the end of April 1999, there are 33,510 disabled employees employed by 7,848 organizations in both public and private sectors (Ministry of Domestic Affairs, 1999).

Table 5. Numbers of the Disabled Who Receive Living Allowances of Vocational Training

FY	1996	1997	1998	1999
Number	942	1,080	1,184	1,536

Source: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (1999b). *Statistical report on employment and training*. Taipei: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration, Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, Republic of China.

Table 6. Numbers of the Disabled Receiving Meal Allowances of Vocational Training

FY	1996	1997	1998	1999 (April)
Number	478	468	617	943

Source: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (1999b). *Statistical report on employment and training*. Taipei: The Employment and Vocational Training Administration, Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, Republic of China.

Chang, Rau, & Chou (1998) summarized the government's training strategies for the disabled in detail. They are the incentives for joining the training, utilization of local training resources, flexible and diversified training programs, more on-the-job training, the integration of vocational education and vocational training, and the

training voucher system. For better employment, individualized and community-based employment services, job redesign, growing group, workshops, vocational evaluation, and government subsidy for employers are further recommended. The vocational training voucher system, which began in October, 1998, will soon be modified to include vocational schools, enterprises, and welfare service institutes in the private sector to accommodate the training needs of the disabled in addition to the public training centers. This change will make the training and employment programs more flexible in the training time schedule and technical areas, and thus more accessible to the disabled (United Daily News, 1999a).

Possible Problems Associated with Vocational Training for the Disabled

Several possible problems associated with the vocational training for the disabled seem obvious after the discussion of the strategies. The discussion on each problem will be stated in detail.

Public training centers can cooperate with private enterprises or welfare service institutes to offer training opportunities for the disabled. However, training should take place after several researches are conducted in the identification of suitable jobs and vocational evaluation.

Job redesign, modified curricula, and adjusted facilities are three key factors in determining the success of the training. Usually, the trainers and employers have no experience in dealing with modification of the job contents for the disabled and the adjustment of regular facilities for disabled trainees.

Lack of reliable vocational evaluation tools is another problem in implementing a training program for the disabled. The identification and validation of vocational evaluation tools are crucial to the prediction of the behavior ability and potential work ability of an individual with disability.

Employers both in public and private sectors tend to hire trainees with mild disability in accordance with the Welfare for the Disabled Act. Therefore, the work opportunities for other groups of disability decrease significantly.

Disabled trainees sometimes fail on their jobs simply because of insufficient living and social abilities instead of work ability. The training curriculum usually lacks appropriate contents to encompass all the three learning areas. More emphases should be put on designing the curriculum for better placement of these trainees.

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Conclusion

The effort to improve the employability of the disabled must include efforts to encourage and motivate these people. The importance of the training to them and the society should be promoted and adequate implementation strategies and methods be taken. Vocational training should focus on all trainable people with different disability.

The elements of a successful vocational training curriculum consist of planning, design, implementation, and evaluation. Furthermore, competency-based curricula seem appropriate to the training programs. For instance, job market investigation and task analysis steps are especially crucial to the development of the employability of the disabled because they will determine the selection of training and employment areas. Besides the technical skills, in most of the cases, the vocational training curriculum for the disabled should include the contents of living and social abilities as their survival skills in the workplace.

The well planned and designed vocational training programs for the disabled lead to successful employment outcome. The employment and growth of these people not only benefit themselves in terms of work and self-fulfillment but also turn the potential human resources into the necessary workforce which can elevate the living standard of the nation and at the same time contribute to the national economic sustainability.

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